

**Amendments to the Abstract:**

Please replace the Abstract with the following:

A method is presented for managing packets in a network including receiving a packet associated with a request for a protocol-based connection, assigning the packet to a selected one of a plurality of classes, forwarding the packet if the number of packets forwarded from the selected class in a predetermined time interval has not reached a first maximum count, and dropping the packet if the number of packets forwarded from the class in the predetermined time interval has reached the first maximum count. In one embodiment, the packet is forwarded only if a count of active connection requests has not reached a second maximum limit. The method may further include steps of, after forwarding the packet, receiving an additional packet associated with the requested protocol-based connection, assigning the additional packet to a pass-through class, and forwarding the additional packet even if the first maximum count or the second maximum count has been reached.